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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000783

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TAGS: [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MAYOR PRESENTS NEW TOWN PLAN, FAILS TO
SATISFY PALESTINIANS

REF: A. TEL AVIV 1033

[B](#). JERUSALEM 736

[C](#). JERUSALEM 337

[D](#). 08 JEUSALEM 2264

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (C) Summary. Jerusalem Mayor Barkat presented a new Jerusalem town plan to the District Planning Committee on May [15](#). The new town plan aims to develop jobs and tourist areas in Jerusalem, and specifically mentions developing East Jerusalem and constructing new housing in East Jerusalem. Municipality employees said the plan could take years to approve and implement, but that the Mayor is already treating it as an official policy document. A city council member said the plan allows for significantly greater construction in Palestinian areas, but that Palestinians could still have trouble obtaining permits because their neighborhoods lack adequate infrastructure to support large buildings, and because their land is often not registered in the National Land Registry. The Palestinian Governor of the Jerusalem District said the plan serves Israeli interests over Palestinian needs. End Summary.

MAYOR BARKAT PRESENTS REVISED TOWN
PLAN FOR DISTRICT COMMITTEE APPROVAL

[12](#). (C) Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat presented his final draft of Jerusalem's new master town plan to the Jerusalem District Planning Committee -- an Israeli Ministry of Interior body -- May 5. Barkat's office stated that the plan was begun by the administrations of former mayors Ehud Olmert and Uri Lupolianski, and that Barkat made changes to the plan to encourage environmentally friendly construction, affordable housing for young residents, and an increase in available high-tech jobs. The plan includes developing East Jerusalem by allowing construction of up to 13,550 residential units, presumably for Palestinians, over the next few decades. Barkat's plan aims to develop certain neighborhoods for tourism, and designates land for five parks. The plan promises to conserve historic areas. Barkat's office said this is the first plan for the city since 1959.

TOWN PLAN REQUIRES PUBLIC REVIEW, BUT
ALREADY OFFICIAL MUNICIPALITY DOCUMENT

[13](#). (C) Director of the Jerusalem Municipality Building, Licensing, and Enforcing Department Tzachi Katz told PolOff May 7 that the District Planning Committee recommended changes to Barkat's plan. He said that the plan will be published once those changes are made -- "in a couple of months" -- and the public will have sixty days to present objections to the District Planning Committee. Katz said Mayor Barkat has already published parts of the plan in the interest of making the process transparent.

14. (C) Jerusalem City Council member for East Jerusalem Affairs Yakir Segev told PolOff May 7 that the new town plan allows for more Palestinian residential construction, but does not specifically address homes that have been built without permits. He said the new plan might make a higher number of unpermitted homes eligible to receive retroactive permits, because the new plan authorizes larger buildings in Palestinian areas than previously. Segev said that approving the plan could take years, based on the number of objections presented to the District Committee, but that the Municipality will treat the plan as a valid policy document in the meantime.

PALESTINIANS WILL STILL FACE OBSTACLES
TO CONSTRUCTION IN EAST JERUSALEM

15. (C) Jerusalem City Council member and founder of the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHN) Meir Margolit told PolOff May 8 that the new town plan is an improvement, but Palestinians will still face significant obstacles to construction. On the positive side, he said, the permitted construction density will increase in most East Jerusalem neighborhoods. For example, he said, construction in Beit Hanina was restricted to 75 percent of each plot of land; under the new plan, that will increase to 240 percent, allowing Palestinians to build taller buildings that accommodate more residents. High density is a good thing in these neighborhoods, Margolit said, because it means fewer people have to move outside of Jerusalem. Margolit said that Israeli neighborhoods typically have a higher average

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construction density allowance than Palestinian neighborhoods, and some neighborhoods in East Jerusalem -- such as Shaykh Jarrah -- appear to have been zoned with settler plans, rather than Palestinians, in mind.

16. (C) Margolit said two main obstacles will prevent Palestinians from building, in spite of the new plan. First, he said, the Municipality will not issue construction permits until appropriate infrastructure is in place. He said he doubts the Municipality or the GoI is willing to invest the millions of shekels necessary to bring most Palestinian neighborhoods up to par. Second, he said, Palestinians often have to prove ownership of the land. Most Palestinians have not registered their land in the National Land Registry, which the Municipality requires before issuing permits.

17. (C) Margolit shared a copy of the new town plan with PolOff, pointing out green areas designated as parks and open space. He said the controversial Silwan neighborhood is designated as a park. He said that Barkat's plan divides East Jerusalem into "areas of high national interest" -- including the Old City and Holy Basin -- and "northern and southern Jerusalem" -- areas where the Municipality does not plan to invest. Margolit said this might reflect the concern some Israelis have that the northern and southern areas could end up as part of a future Palestinian state.

PALESTINIANS BELIEVE PLAN FAVORS ISRAELIS

18. (C) PA Jerusalem District Governor Adnan Husseini told PolOff May 11 that the new plan is designed to serve Israeli interests, and does not consider Palestinian needs. He said the plan focuses on the Old City and Holy Basin, integrating the city in a way that will complicate any discussion of a future Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem. He said the creation of parks in many cases will require the demolition of Palestinian homes, particularly in Silwan. He said that, even if new areas become available for Palestinian construction, the town plan displaces Palestinians from their current neighborhoods.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Israeli planning NGO Bimkom are separately working on analyses of the plan; both are due later this month. An initial review by Post shows an increase in land available in East Jerusalem for construction, and an increase in the size of buildings allowed in most areas. Although some contacts emphasize the positive aspects of the new plan, Mayor Barkat's own admission that Palestinians were not part of the planning process (ref B) ensures that Palestinians will not be satisfied.

WALLES